THE FUTURE OF LABOR.

Address of Henry D. Lloyd Before the American Federation of Labor, Chicago, December, 1893.

A Right to Work and a Duty to Organize—The Liberty of Union Can Be Preserved Only by Using the Union to Get More Liberty.

Workingmen have the undoubted right of organization. The question of the day is: "What are they going to do with it?" This right, like all other rights, can be kept healthy only by exercise. The liberty of union can be preserved only by using the union to get more liberty. The workingmen have the vote, but there are signs in plenty that if they do not use it to free themselves in other ways, they will lose that right and all the other freedoms that are clustered with it. "Too many people vote in Ohio," the counsel of a great trust said lately in the United States courts. A constitutional convention is about to be held in New York, and one of the reforms to be pressed is some qualification of the suffrage, to put an end to this evil of "too many people voting." Never have the people—the working people—had the right, the light, the might they have now. There are many periods in the past which shine like golden ages in contrast with our own, but only at points and for single moments. There were no paupers and no unemployed in our fatherlands—Germany or Ireland or England—in the good old times when society was organized in the village communities and the land held in common. But, as well, there was no right to change your trade, your place, your religion. You were not what you are to-day—a person, a man, a citizen—but only one of a tribe, a guild, a parish. Thorold Rogers tells us of the golden age of labor in England in the fifteenth century, when eight hours was the working day in town and country, and when men were dear and living was cheap. But in that golden age a coal miner, a salt worker, was not a man. He was a creature of the pit. Once a miner, always a miner, even unto the third and fourth generation of his descendants, and a fixture of the property, sold with its sale to any new owner. If we can look backward to those days when longing, through the windows of our common schools and our voting booths, it is because we have lost the virtue to look forward, and it will come true again that those who avevt their faces from the hopes and the duties that call them on will turn to stone—pillars of salt—and of salt that has lost its savor. From him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath. To the man who is free and would remain free, fate is a policeman uttering the perpetual word "Move on."

The coal miners of England, in their recent contest with the mine owners, did more than resist a demand for a reduction of wages. They carried the standard of their rights to a new height. They demanded that hereafter the cost of a decent life for the man who mined should be a fixed charge on the product of the mines; that in the fluctuations of supply and demand there should be a line—a life line, not a dead line—below which the share of labor should not go. The demand for a living wage was a rebellion of the people against the maladministration of their lives and labor, their property and their liberty, by others. It was an insurrection against the decree of business that wages shall follow prices, and prices know no law but the competition between traders. We and our wives and children, the miners said, are not chips for gamblers. Take your choice, a living wage or no coal! In taking this position the miners stood for no more than what Mill, Ricardo, and all the great economists have declared to be the true law of wages. The public came to their support. Members of parliament, some of the nobility, more than one mine owner gave money and encouragement. A daily newspaper in London raised $90,000 to feed the starving. Large numbers of the clergy of all denominations took part in the relief work, and, more important, declared in public that the demand for a living wage was one no people could remain Christian and deny. The clergy of Bristol united in a formal public statement to this effect.

Men, women, and even children who could not spare money sacrificed watches, rings, anything that could be sold. Ben Tillett, the labor leader, gave his bicycle. Miss Frances E. Willard, of Chicago, then in England, gave her watch. The women where collieries were at work sent to the mothers in idle districts to bring their starving children to their homes to share with their own children, though these had not enough. Mothers wept for joy at the chance thus to surrender to strangers little once whom they could not feed, and whom they might never see again. It is in such blood-red letters as these that our theory that labor is a commodity imprints itself in the lives of the people. The defeat for the demand for a reduction of wages is much; but it is more that the miners have burned these new words of the living wage into the bill of rights. It was the union of the miners which made this resistance and this counter advance possible. Had the business men broken down the principle of the living wage they would have moved on to strike down the union. The men on their side must not stop. They must take the next step. The next step to the principle of the living wage is the living wage itself. The living wage is that share in the products of the common toil which belongs to men, and men, the best authority tells us, are born equal, with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Alienate one right, the smallest right to life, liberty, or happiness, and the wage is less than the living wage. "I have a right to be a man," said Francis Lieber, "because I am a man." That is the living wage, and to realize it is the sure destiny of organized labor. It was the work of our forefathers to establish the truth that no one shall govern a country without the consent of its people. It is our work to establish the equally selfevident truth that no one shall govern an industry without the consent of the people. "The right to work" was a phrase of fire which flew out of the mouth of a senator of the United States during the heat of the excitement at Homestead. But "the right to work" is a half truth. A great student of men says that it is half truths which lead them. But even so, there is another half truth beyond this which has also its power of leading. Besides the right to work stands as of equal majesty the right to share as a man in the produce of the work.

The organized workingmen of London have compelled its government to adopt trades union principles as an employer. The London council now makes it a part of every contract for city work that contractors shall pay the trade union rate of wages, and observe the trade union conditions as to hours, etc. More than this, the government of London under the lead of John Burns and other labor members of the council, has taken the bold step of beginning the abolition of the contractor and his profit-hunting exploitation of the tax payer and the workingman, and substituting for it direct dealing by the city with its men. The first experiment in this new policy has been a success. The estimate of the council's engineer for a new sewer in York road, Lambeth, was $35,000. When bids were called for the lowest was $58,000. The council rejected the bids and did the work themselves. It cost only $26,000. The saving was $32,000 on $58,000, nearly 60 per cent. The work was better done than contract work. John Burns told the council that he had been on the job from start to finish because he was determined that it should be a good job. "With regard to the excellence and dursbility of workmanship there was no comparison between the work done by the council and work done by the contractors, particularly in unseen work." A member of the council who was a builder and contractor confirmed this and said that a better piece of work had never been done in London, and this was ratified by others. The success has stimulated the council to order the adoption of the same plan in other improvements. In New Zealand, too, the government has abolished the contractor in building railroads and other public works. The work is given out by the public officials in sections to the workingmen, who organize themselves in co-operative groups, selecting their own foreman, and share alike in the earnings. It is to the union, to the preaching of the principles of the trade union and the perfection of the discipline with which the workingmen have fought for and upheld their union that this remarkable new departure is due. The elimination of the contractor means many things. It is the repudiation of indirect sweating—that meanest parasitism upon the poor, disclaiming responsibility because done through agents. It is the repudiation of sweating altogether. When the people are the employer and the people are the employe, there will be no sweating. It is the repudiation of profit hunting, and instead of the selfishness of the individual makes the welfare of all the star to steer by. It means a saving in the common toil and an increase of wealth, for we find the higher motive produces the better and cheaper work; and it means a step, and a long one, towards closing the gulf between the too rich and the too poor, for it stops the abstraction of profit. The London county council is now discussing a plan for constructing a system of electric railroads, underground in the city, above ground beyond, in order to scatter its congested working people into homes in the green fields and pure air of the country. A man will be carried twenty miles for four cents, because the road will be built by the city and operated by the city. The city can get money at 3 per cent. instead of 6 per cent. It has to pay no boodle for the franchise no dividends on watered stock.

Since coming into power the Gladstone administration has done several notable things. Both the war office and the admiralty have increased the rate of pay to meet the aspirations of labor for a living wage, and the war department, like the city of London, has begun the abolition of the contract system. To remedy the grievance that the judges are all of one class, the government has appointed a number of representative working men as magistrates in the larger cities. The eight hour day has been introduced into the gun works at Woolwich arsenal. Hours have been shortened elsewhere to prevent wholesale dismissals during slack times. The government has interfered to protect trade unionists in non-union shops, and has promised to pay trade union wages in the government dock yards. Lastly, to protect workmen from accidents and to secure them damages in cases of injury, the government is pressing through parliament an employer's liability bill, so thorough that John Burns declares it to be another Magna Charta of labor. The manner of all this is even more important than the matter. When the government, the largest employer of labor, sets such an example of respect for the new aspirations of the people, it gives the program of the labor movement the prestige of patriotism.

All these are concessions; they have been forced out of the government—the largest employer of labor—by the uncessing agitation of organized labor. "England," says Gladstone, "never concedes anything to Ireland, except when moved to do so through fear." The working masses of Great Britain scared the classes into giving them the vote and surrendering the monopoly of government. With a vote they have gone to work to scare them out of their other monopolies one after the other. In all the reforms, of suffrage, hours of labor, abolition of the contract system, organized labor has been the apex and the bulk and the force of the wedge splitting its way through class government in politics and industry. What the workingmen have got is but the beginning. They, too, want "more." At their trade union congresses they have demanded that lands and mines be nationalized, and at Belfast the last congress pledged itself "to the principle of the collective ownership and control of all the means of production and distribution." Our English brothers could not have done this without the trade unions, but they could not have done it with their trade unions alone. They used their power of organized labor as a stepping stone to the greater power of organized citizenship. They have put labor members into the city councils, into parliament, on the magistrate's bench. "The political labor movement in England is booming," Keir Hardies writes me from the house of commons. "At the municipal election this fall the labor vote ranged from 30 to 50 per cent. of the total vote cast. In some cases the liberals coalesced with the tories, and *vice versa*, and in every case the labor men stood on strictly independent lines. When the parliamentary election comes the labor vote will decide it in nearly every industrial constituency.

The battle of Bunker Hill was fought by a general who died without desiring American independence. Washington, John Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, all are on record as striving not for independence, but for colonial rights. This was